

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 OMB-01 DRC-01 EB-11 FEA-02 SCI-06

EA-11 AGR-20 INT-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 AID-20 CU-04

FRB-02 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 /236 W

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R 191100Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5210

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, ECON, GB

SUBJ: PRESIDENT BONGO'S NEWS CONFERENCE

1. PRESIDENT BONGO TOUCHED ON FOLLOWING THEMES DURING  
NEWS CONFERENCE AT LIBREVILLE AIRPORT MORNING OF  
FEBRUARY 18 UPON RETURN FROM PRIVATE VISIT TO FRANCE:

A. FRANCO-GABONESE ACCORDS - BONGO REITERATED AS HE  
HAD IN PARIS THAT HE WAS "VERY SATISFIED" WITH THE  
RECENTLY INCLUDED ACCORDS AND WITH HIS TALKS WITH FRENCH  
PRESIDENT POMPIDOU.

B. ENERGY - DUE TO DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE IT WAS NATURAL  
THAT PRICE OF URANIUM WOULD RISE. BONGO CONVINCED OF  
THIS AFTER TALKS WITH FRENCH PRESIDENT POMPIDOU. IF  
THERE IS A DROP IN PETROLEUM PRICES HE WILL "CLOSE THE  
VALVES." BONGO AGAIN EXPRESSED SUPPORT OF FRENCH ENERGY  
POLICY DECLARING HIMSELF AGAINST THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE  
BECAUSE IT "EXCLUDED AFRICANS" AND BECAUSE IT NECESSARY  
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TO BRING CONSUMERS AND PRODUCERS TOGETHER AROUND THE

SAME TABLE.

C. OCAM - BONGO UNHAPPY WITH ORGANIZATION. HE WISHED TO BREAK WITH IT LAST YEAR BUT WAS DISSUADED BY IVORY COAST PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY. IF OCAM MEMBERS DO NOT LISTEN TO HIM IN THE FUTURE HOWEVER HE WILL TAKE GABON OUT OF ORGANIZATION.

D. COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS - PRESIDENT SPOKE WITH BUSINESSMEN DURING HIS RECENT STAY IN PARIS DISCUSSING FOLLOWING PROJECTS - AMMONIA AND FERTILIZER PLANT IN PORT-GENTIL, RANCHES IN TCHIBANGA AND HAUTE OGOOUE, AND DEVELOPMENT OF PORT OF MAYUMBA. HE AGAIN CALLED FOR AN OPEC TYPE ORGANIZATION FOR WOOD. WITH A FLUSH OF ANGER BONGO SAID HE WAS "THROUGH WITH THE NATIONALIST CHINESE" WHO HE ACCUSED OF STALLING ON FRANCEVILLE SUGAR REFINERY PROJECT (LIBREVILLE 0994 AND 1011 (1973)). RE THIS PROJECT HE SAID "WE WILL DO IT OURSELVES". ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION BONGO REMINDED AUDIENCE OF HIS EARLIER DICTUM THAT GABON'S POLITICS IS ECONOMICS.

E. COST OF LIVING - BONGO DENIED THAT COST OF LIVING IS EXCESSIVELY HIGH IN GABON. HE NOTED COST OF LIVING IS HIGH EVERYWHERE, THAT STRINGENT PRICE CONTROLS HAVE BEEN INSTITUTED IN GABON, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO BASIC COMMODITIES, BUT BLASTED LOCAL BUSINESSMEN WHO PROFIT FROM HIS ABSENCE BY RAISING PRICES.

F. ISLAM - BONGO DENIED STORES THAT HE PRESSURING MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT TO BECOME MUSLIMS. HOWEVER, IN NEXT BREATH, HE SAID THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH BONGO ARE AGAINST HIM.

G. SAHEL DROUGHT - ASKED ABOUT "THE PROBLEM OF WATER" IN GABON, BONGO ADMITTED HE HAD SAID IN PARIS IT RAINS TOO MUCH IN GABON BUT SHEEPISHLY DECLINED FURTHER COMMENT SAYING HE DID NOT WISH TO MAKE LIGHT OF PROBLEMS OF SAHEL. HE REMINDED AUDIENCE THAT ZAIRE AND GABON ARE MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO SAHEL RELIEF.

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H. YOUTH - YOUTH IS SACRED AND TEACHERS WHO GIVE GRADES GUIDED BY FAVORITISM WERE WARNED STERNLY.

2. COMMENT. PRESS CONFERENCE WAS TYPICAL BONGO PERFORMANCE WHICH MIXES EXPLANATION, CAJOLERY AND HECTORING. NOTEWORTHY WAS THE HEAVY EMPHASIS ON ECONOMIC MATTERS WHICH ARE CLEARLY DOMINATING BONGO'S PRESENT THINKING.  
COUNTRYMAN

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